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## Children & Family Services Division Office of Child Abuse Prevention

### **SPECIAL START TRAINING PROGRAM**

*Trained professionals assist parents with infants leaving Neonatal intensive care unit*

The Special Start Training Program (SSTP) is funded by the California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Office of Child Abuse Prevention (OCAP) using federal Child Abuse Prevention & Treatment Act (CAPTA) funds. One purpose of CAPTA funds is to develop, implement, or operate programs that assist, obtain or coordinate necessary services for families of disabled infants with life-threatening issues. The SSTP trains community professionals who work with biological parents, foster parents, or caregivers in the home environment of the infant after discharge from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

In California, currently, there are 22 Level 3 regional NICUs, 22 Level 2 NICUs, and 72 Community (or Level 1) NICUs in medical facilities across the state. The grant for this training was awarded to the University of California at San Francisco Medical Center. The medical center has a leading Level 3 regional NICU with a new state-of-the-art neuro-intensive NICU. The SSTP teaches specifics of the developmental needs of the medically fragile infant upon discharge from the NICU. The training not only educates the caregivers about developmental needs, but also instructs the parents/caregivers in reading the infants' cues and in appropriately responding to these cues. This early intervention encourages relationship bonding while facilitating the infants' development with proven positive results.

Premature and low birth weight births have been increasing in California. Prematurity has been found to be a risk factor for child abuse and neglect, and therefore there is a growing need for SSTP training. Because of the special needs of infants being discharged from NICUs, parents are not always equipped to properly care for them without some kind of specialized training.

Historically, professionals, caregivers and parents have been receiving one-day, on-site trainings which have typically been held throughout the state. In addition, a three-day practicum is being offered at the SSTP offices. The on-site trainings have proven effective in providing essential education and training for individuals working with parents and families responsible for caring for infants. In response to the increasing numbers of infants in the NICUs, the SSTP has expanded to include Webcasting. A series of Webcasts are being developed over the next year to increase the number of potential trainees. For more information, please visit the SSTP web site at: <http://specialstart.ucsf.edu/sstp/>.